Never Say Never

by AnneScriblerian

Summary

Severus Snape must go back in time and save his family line. A Sense and Sensibility/Potterverse crossover. I think of it as "Rickman/Rickman." This was my first fanfic!

Notes

Written in 2009.

See the end of the work for more notes.

Time: June, 1990
Place: Hogwarts

Severus Snape was not the sort to relax. For one thing, any slip in his alertness or his mask would lead to certain torture and probable death. The torture he feared from showing weakness at Hogwarts differed only in kind from the torture he would experience at the hands of the Death Eaters and the Dark Lord himself, were Severus to slip and reveal his treachery. Given these, really quite reasonable, fears, a relaxed Severus was almost an oxymoron. But if there was a time that he almost relaxed, it would be in late June.

His marks were in, one class of demonic children was gone from Hogwarts for good, and their first-year replacements were yet to arrive. Regardless, all of the brats were gone away for the
summer, and instead of their shrieks, giggles, and shouts, the castle was quiet. Even Peeves took a little time off in late June – gloating over his traditional end-of-the-year orgy of destruction. Yes. If there ever were a time when Severus Snape was relaxed, it would be now.

Just as he began to sink down in his desk chair, alone in his quarters, contemplating the wonders of a clear desk and a full glass of scotch, there was a knock on his door.

"GO ... AWAY" he bellowed. Even that, the use of his voice's full volume, was a summer pleasure. He would never let his sangfroid slip so in front of students.

"If you please, Professor ..." a raspy whisper somehow carried through the door.

Damn it. It was Filch. He could practically hear the man scraping and bowing, hat in hand, outside of his door. He relied on Filch's endless spite against the students for much of the "intelligence" that convinced the little demons that he could read their minds. Better not to turn the Squib against him.

Waving the hand that did not hold the scotch to allow Filch entry to his private quarters, Severus arranged his features into a snarl. That small effort was all it took to tip the scales from relaxation to resentment, and the snarl was only a mask for the microsecond it took for Severus's eyebrow to raise in a sardonic question mark.

"Professor, sir, I'm so sorry ..."

Severus cut the man off with a wave of his hand. This time it was the hand holding the scotch, and as they watched the precious liquid (Glen Garioch, 1958) splash onto the empty desk, Filch’s face turned white, while Severus’s shaded towards purple. This convinced Filch to get on with it.

"Professor. Sir. The Headmaster insists that I accompany you to his office. Er ... now, sir."

Dumbledore. Of course. The bastard probably had an alarm set on Snape's liquor cabinet and had timed this interruption perfectly. Severus knew that arguing with Filch would simply waste his breath and make the time when he got back to his quarters even later. He sighed, resigned himself to a cup of tea (vile stuff, tea) and followed Filch to the Headmaster's quarters. He couldn't imagine what the man wanted. The students were gone, and the debriefing after his last visit to Malfoy Manor had been terribly thorough. He suspected it was sheer bloody-mindedness.

He was surprised, then, when Dumbledore ushered him in hurriedly, not a teapot nor teacup in sight. He was about to become even more surprised.

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Time: Thirty minutes later.
Place: Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

"So, you're saying I have to go back in time and save my great-great ... something or other ... grandmother's life?" Severus had rarely been less articulate. He didn't even notice, so great was his shock.

"Not save her life, precisely. You need to ensure that she is born."

"How? That doesn't even make any sense." Aside from the obviously ridiculous notion of time travel, that is. Severus did not voice the second half of this observation, preferring to

"All I can tell you, my dear boy, is that when you arrive at your destination, your ancestress's parents will be there. You must rise to the occasion and do whatever you must to ensure that your ancestress is born."
"Which ancestress? When? How?" Severus sputtered to a stop as Dumbledore laid a finger besides his nose and twinkled his eyes at Severus. If he didn’t owe his life, his loyalty, and his sanity to the man he would have hit Dumbledore with an Unforgivable Curse right then and there. Instead, he used every ounce of will he had to pull himself to a reluctant stop. He focused on breathing deeply as Dumbledore continued his "explanation."

"I'm afraid I can't say any more about it, my dear boy. You see, there is this thing called a temporal paradox ..."

Snape stopped listening. What did he care about paradoxes? Magic was a paradox, and yet here they all were. He sighed inwardly, steeled himself, and began listing essential supplies for such a "mission" in his head until he noticed that Dumbledore was using his "winding things up" tone.

"... So you see, Severus, it is unavoidable that once again, I must ask too much of you."

Severus sniffed, insulted by the implication that he would not be up to any task that Dumbledore might be able to think up.

"Certainly, Headmaster. I will simply need a few hours to collect the necessary supplies ..."

"No time, I'm afraid, Severus. You must leave now."

"Now?"

"Immediately. And I'll be needing your wand."

Severus had never been speechless before. Oh, he had been silent. He had been silent in the aftermath of a Cruciatus curse, during torture, and even when he was forced to chaperone this year's Winter Ball. But this was honestly the first time he could remember that a sarcastic retort did not even occur to him in the face of absurdity.

Dumbledore took advantage of the man's shock and gently took his wand from his slack fingers. He turned around and left Severus staring blankly at the back of his Headmaster’s head. When Severus realized that he was standing there, gobsmacked like a Hufflepuff first-year, he snapped his mouth closed. Dumbledore was already turning around and was holding something. It was not Severus's wand.

"Wha ... What is that?"

"This, my dear boy, is Salazar Slytherin's shillelagh. It is also, at this time, a very special Portkey. A Portkey to the past."

The shillelagh was beautiful. It looked like a large caduceus. Two jade serpents were entwined around the straight blackthorn staff, and an ornately worked silver knot served as a pommel. Severus unconsciously reached towards the shillelagh, but Dumbledore immediately pulled it back.

"Ah, ah! Not yet, my dear boy." Dumbledore twinkled again.

Severus snatched his hand back as though he had been reaching into the fire under one of his cauldrons. He didn't really believe that the shillelagh was a "Portkey to the past" (what a ridiculous notion), but he was not in the habit of touching possibly cursed items without a thorough inspection first. His eyes, however, raked up and down its length eagerly as Dumbledore nattered on about duty, honor, and danger.
"Yes. Yes, Headmaster. I understand," Severus broke in when he couldn’t take it anymore. "If you just give me my wand back I'm sure I can manage without additional supplies."

"That's just what I've been saying, Severus. You won't be needing your wand on this particular mission. All you need is your charming self."

That's when Severus finally figured out that Dumbledore was having him on.

Time: 1791  
Place: London

Severus Snape hated to be wrong.

More than that, he hated being helpless. And helpless he was. After the truly evil hook behind his navel had pulled him farther than he thought possible, he found himself clutching Slytherin's shillelagh as he looked around a dark room that stank of illness and blood. A pregnant woman lay gasping on a filthy pallet, her nightclothes covered in blood. She did not seem to be attended; she was alone. He rushed to her side, sure that this was his ancestress's mother, and that he had no time to lose. As he knelt by her bedside, he thanked Merlin that he knew some basic Medi-spells that did not require a wand. Feeling her pulse, with one hand on her wrist and one on the side of her neck, he silently chanted a diagnosis spell. When he discerned the poison running through her – a magical poison at that – he started and dropped her wrist.

What wouldn't he do for a bezoar at that moment. Sparing less than a moment to damn Dumbledore to a series of infinite hells for not allowing him to bring his potions kit, Severus frantically looked around the room for clues to the source of the potion while going over counter-potions in his mind. Not that it mattered. There was nothing he could use here. All that was in this room was the woman, the blood, and a filthy basin with a dirty knife submerged in yet more blood. Gods. This was worse than a Death Eater interrogation room.

Just as he saw the bottle, snatched it and sniffed it, he was startled to hear a hoarse voice behind him.

"Doctor? I can't believe I fell asleep. Is there any change? Is there any hope?"

Not bothering to look at the man who was addressing him, Severus snapped, "Who gave her this potion?"

"Potion? Why, doctor, that's the medicine you told me she needed every half hour. I've been giving it to her faithfully since sunset."

The darkness in the room and outside of the window, broken as it was by a dim glow, proved to Severus that the woman had had many, many doses of the poison. Shaking his head, hardly believing that he had failed in his mission in less than five minutes, he turned to face the man behind him. What he saw shocked him more than anything else had during this bedeviled night. Standing behind Severus Snape was ... for lack of a better term ... himself.

The man stared at him, equally shocked.

"Who ... who are you? You're not Dr. Riddle! What are you doing here? Why are you touching Beth?"

Severus answered without pausing to think. "I'm Professor Severus Snape."

Before the final "p" had fully left his lips, Severus Snape felt a fist connect with his right
cheekbone. Without further ado, he crashed to the floor.

Luckily, Severus had plenty of experience with being punched. He noted grimly that not all luck was good, and picked himself up off the floor, where the force of the blow had knocked him.

"Sir, I am a Professor ... of Medicine. Please do not be alarmed. I mean your ... the lady no harm. I am a healer. I am trying to help her."

Even as Severus spoke what he hoped were calming words to the madman with his face, he was turning back to the woman. His heart (and yes, he had a heart) thudded to the floor as quickly as his body just had when he realized that it was definitively too late to save her. Even had he had a bezoar, even had he had the perfect counter-potion, it would be too late. He turned to his manicidal double with a look of despair.

The man clearly resembled Severus in more than just looks, as he instantly read the professor's expression correctly and fell to his knees beside the bed. Snape turned away, not sure if the pain he felt was only for himself and his typical, inevitable, utter failure.

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Time: Three Hours Later
Place: Colonel Christopher Brandon's Apartments, London

Once he saw Colonel Brandon in a lighted room (although with damned few candles), Severus realized that the man did not look exactly like him. For one thing, he was fair, instead of dark. His eyes and hair looked faded to Severus, who was used to his own black hair and eyes. And there was something about his mouth. It was weak. Severus felt stirrings of scorn for this weak, faded imitation of himself until his customary smirk caused a sharp twinge in his bruised cheek, reminding him that this Brandon was actually quite strong enough.

As he watched this man stare into the fire, clutching a glass of scotch, Severus was motionless. His mind, however, was working at a frantic pace – even for him. So, "Dr. Tom Riddle" had forced Brandon to unwittingly poison the woman he loved like a daughter. A woman who was pregnant, but not with Brandon’s baby. No, the father of the poor, dead child (even Severus could spare pity for a murdered infant) was one Archibald Snape. "Archibald." That in itself was a reason for mortification. Hence the punch to the face Severus had been treated to when he stated his surname. The misunderstanding was perfectly reasonable. What was not reasonable was that this Archibald Snape had been killed in a duel with a “Lord Voldemort.” Brandon had, again, reasonably, decided that this story was complete tosh – manufactured by a man desperate to escape the woman he had despoiled and to avoid taking responsibility for her (and his) infant.

Even a stunning intellect like Severus's was having trouble with this one. He remembered Albus going on about a temporal paradox and wished he had paid more attention. But no matter. He was a dead man. By all rights, he shouldn’t exist. He had done nothing more than watch (and serve as a human punching bag) while his ancestress (Ancestresses? Was the fetus female? Must have been.) died. She was dead. He was dead.

Burying his face in his hands, he once again jarred his bruised cheekbone. Bloody hell, that was sore. Brandon had a mean left hook. It took Severus several more seconds than it normally would have (it had been a rough night) to realize that he was not dead, and therefore his ancestress was not dead. But then who was the parent? Wasn't she dead?

It wasn't until he woke at dawn the next morning, startled into alertness by the unaccustomed light and noise of the city (he really needed to get out of the Hogwarts dungeons more often) that Severus realized the truth. It was a prophecy. A bloody prophecy. "When you arrive at your destination, your ancestress’s parents will be there. You must rise to the occasion and do whatever
you must to ensure that your ancestress is born." Even as his heart sank with the knowledge of just how depraved this latest plan of Albus's was, he couldn't help but be surprised that the old man would make such an obvious penis joke.

Now, this is something that most Muggles would never realize. Nevertheless, it is true. Male wizards can bear children. Oh, it's not common. And it's certainly not pleasant. But, under very specific circumstances, it can, has, and will happen. Severus’s eyes had not yet adjusted to the light of dawn before he realized that, paradoxes or no, he was in one of those very specific circumstances. If the last remaining member of a wizarding family is a male, and there are no other options, he will bear a child to continue the bloodline.

Even Muggles know that generally there are many, many other options for conceiving a child besides having a man become pregnant. However, things get more complicated when there is a prophecy involved. His ancestress's parents were in the room, when he arrived. The woman was dead. Only Severus and Brandon still lived. He had to ensure that his ancestress was born. After Voldemort had murdered "Archibald" (Severus could really not take that name seriously. Honestly. Despite it all.) Severus was the last remaining member of a wizarding family (at least in this time). Q.E.D.

"I am so fucked," Severus whispered.

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Ever the master spy, Severus had learned more about Colonel Brandon in a few hours acquaintance than anyone else, including Brandon himself, knew about the man. The fact that he was a talented Legilimens (no wand necessary, thank Merlin) had actually not made that much of a difference. The man had been all too willing to pour his heart out to the "Professor of Medicine" last night. Severus envied the man his openness even as he scorned it. Brandon had told quite a tale, worthy of a novel. And, Severus had ascertained, it was all true.

The woman, the would-be Snape ancestress, was the daughter of the woman Brandon loved. Brandon had been torn from Eliza when he was a youth, because of her relative poverty, and been shipped off to a regiment in the West Indies. When he arrived back in London, years later, Eliza lay, pregnant and dying. That time the child had survived, though the woman had not. Brandon adopted the girl, Beth, as his ward. He had placed her with a respectable family who lived out in the country and had visited her often. His love for and guilt about Eliza found solace in his love and care for Beth, until she disappeared over a year ago. Brandon blamed himself for not being able to find the girl. How could he know that Archibald Snape, the girl's seducer, was a wizard?

If not for Voldemort's interference, Snape's ancestress would have been born into a situation uncomfortably close to Severus's own upbringing. A shiftless, selfish father. A disenchanted, abused mother. And not enough money to cover anyone's inherent flaws. Of course, Voldemort could have simply killed the girl, without the duel, the poison, or Colonel Brandon’s unwitting participation. But, once again (and at this Severus did enjoy a lovely smirk), Voldemort’s insatiable need for drama and his ridiculous sadism had left a window open when he closed that door. Voldemort had been trying to erase Severus. And not only Severus, but generations of the Snape family. Severus had never been fond of his family name. His father had seen to that. But to destroy even earlier generations – men and women who might have been honorable (or even happy, Severus almost let himself think the word) – that was the act of an unprincipled coward. Severus grudgingly admitted that Albus, the silly, soppy old fool, was once again right. This situation could not be left to stand as it was. This was personal.

Now, how to straddle the sticking point (so to speak) of the act of conception itself? If he had his wand his could simply Imperious Brandon, get himself knocked up, then Obliviate the man and be on his merry way. And, of course, that was precisely the reason Dumbledore had taken his wand.
Getting bored with damning the Headmaster, Severus varied his spleen by imagining the old man living forever – Headmaster over generation after generation of students and teachers. A fitting hell for a Severus Snape. But the old man would probably enjoy it.

Speaking of enjoyable things ... Before Severus could finish this thought, he heard a knock on the door. He waved his hand. Nothing happened. Sighing, he said, "Come in." A young maid nervously poked her head in the door.

"Pardon me, sir," the girl's voice trailed off.

She was as bad as a house elf.

"You are pardoned. Now. What. Do. You. Want?"

Severus was pleased to see the maid gulp, blanch, and then quickly inform him that breakfast was served downstairs. She bobbed the fastest curtsey he had ever seen and disappeared from his doorway with alacrity. His "teaching voice" worked better on human servants than on house-elves. They just ignored his tone and ducked or Disapparated when he threw things at them.

Severus dressed in the clean shirt, jacket and trousers he found hanging in his room and hefted the small purse of coins that he found on the dresser (with a note: "I realize that this is no way repays you for your service to Beth, and to me. But please accept what recompense I can offer"). He was surprised to find that the servants here must be quieter than house-elves – the clothing and money were not there when he went to bed. The fact that he had heard no one enter his room in the night showed a disturbing lack of vigilance on his part. He did not excuse himself, but he ascribed his uncustomary weakness to the knowledge that he shouldn't even exist yet (anymore?) and therefore could certainly not be in Voldemort's sights (or Albus's for that matter). He wondered again at the openness and hospitality of his host. Colonel Brandon was definitely a Hufflepuff. To think – not only would he have to give birth to his own ancestress, but her father (her other father) would be a Hufflepuff. Unbelievable.

It was the shillelagh that had done it. Not by magical means, well, not by magical means. But it was as good as a secret password or charmed key. Only a gentleman of high standing would be both a Professor of Medicine and have such a costly personal item. Colonel Brandon was a gentleman. In this time, in this place, two gentlemen would instantly recognize one another as equals. Brandon saw Snape as his equal and showed his gratitude for Severus's efforts with Beth as he would to an equal. That explained the hospitality – kindness to a man who was travelling and whose luggage and wallet had been taken by highwaymen (Severus thought one tale fit for a novel deserved another such). The openness was more unusual, even for such a Hufflepuff-y gentleman.

Brandon apologized for his openness over breakfast.

"I realize that I importuned both your body and your mind last night, Mr. Snape, and I am truly sorry for both," Brandon sounded and looked sincere – but was that a little smirk as Brandon's eyes quickly flicked to, and away from, the bruise on Severus's cheek? Maybe the man wasn't a Hufflepuff after all. "It's just that ... Well, it all seemed so unreal, so impossible. Riddle was gone, you appeared, and your appearance ..." The smirk was replaced by a look of wonder, politely but inexpertly concealed.

"Yes. It is rather striking, the resemblance, is it not?"

"It's just that I have an unusually, ahem, 'striking' appearance. A nose like mine, well, like ours I suppose, might be considered to be a once in a generation occurrence!" Brandon's look of wonder was replaced by a smile.
Severus was sure that he didn't look as nonplussed as he felt, until Brandon's smile wavered, split, and his mouth opened in a throaty, hearty chuckle. It was turning out to be uncomfortably difficult to hide his emotions from a man who had looked at an exact replica of Severus's face in the shaving mirror every day of his adult life. Severus shivered a bit as he wondered if Brandon was identical to him in every respect. He hid the shiver with an answering chuckle, didn't even let himself think about what they said about large noses and feet and... he tucked into his eggs with unaccustomed vigor to hide his reaction.

Brandon once again shifted moods. The man wasn't a Hufflepuff – with his quick actions, lack of guile, and mood swings, Colonel Brandon was, tragically, but definitely, a Gryffindor. Damn it all to hell. The thought that his ancestress's father (her other father, he reminded himself) was a bloody Gryffindor allowed Severus to arrange his face in a suitably somber fashion as Brandon explained that it wasn't only the shock of Snape's appearance that had opened the floodgates of his heart last night. It was that it was all happening again. Again, and again, and again.

As Brandon explained about his pretty, silly new love and her love for the pretty, silly Willoughby (now that was a weak name if Severus had ever heard one), he didn’t need to express aloud his fears for the future. Brandon fully expected to find himself kneeling next to another bloody pallet, in another dark and filthy room, as yet another woman he loved died with her child for her devotion to a man who didn't deserve the title.

If there's anything Severus was sure of, it was that it would happen again. Passionate, beautiful women would befriend men like him and Brandon. They would talk to them, and spend time with them, and maybe even pity them. But they reserved their love for strutting peacocks. Like James Potter. Like this Willoughby. Voldemort didn’t have to do anything for this to happen. It was the way of the world. Before they had left the breakfast table, Severus knew what he had to do. He had to get his ancestress born. But, perhaps even more importantly, he had to show Brandon how to make it stop happening. How to show the world that a man like him, men like them, had so much more to offer than those mindless, arrogant, pretty boys could even imagine.

Severus planned all that day. He needed the time to remember how it felt. Passion. Tenderness. Love? Perhaps that was taking it too far. But he did think it was love, once. He had loved Lily but had never touched her. Not in any intimate way. He wouldn't even let her hold his hand when they walked together as children, and he stiffened every time she gave him a spontaneous hug. When they were still friends, for a time, at Hogwarts... He was too petrified to let himself react, then. Afraid of embarrassment. Of rejection. Most of all, of losing control. He wanted her so badly that he feared one gap in his defenses would unleash a storm of passion that would destroy them both, destroy them all. Then Lucius had taught him that passion does destroy. But not in a flood; not in a storm. No. It destroyed drop by drop by drop. In endless, agonizing, ecstatic moments. But Severus was not here to destroy. He was here to create.

At luncheon Severus took the opportunity to give Colonel Brandon a headache. Simple to do, just a pinch of the right compound in the coffee (thank Merlin the man didn’t drink tea anymore than Severus did). A Potions Master like him could find the ingredients for a simple headache even in 18th-century London. Even without a wand. Severus used the cover of Brandon’s pain and confusion to achieve his first two goals. He used his power as a Legilimens to replace the name of "Archibald Snape" with the name "Willoughby" in Brandon's head. And he led the man to bed.

Severus thought it was a shame that he needed to let Brandon suffer for a few hours, while he waited for dusk to fall. But, considering what was to follow, he thought that a few hours of pain was a fair trade for the nine months of hell he was committing himself to for this mission. Not that Brandon knew about the mission. But Severus would make sure that Brandon was amply rewarded for his sacrifice. While Severus did not approach Brandon's body that afternoon, he pushed and pulled (gently, gently) at the man's mind, looking for secrets that would make the
evening go more easily for both of them.

What he found out about Colonel Brandon's sexual history was not especially surprising to him, but it might be to anyone who has not read their Michel Foucault. Sexual acts in the 18th century were not as rigidly classified as they are today. The sexual hysteria of the Victorian era has blinded us, wizard and Muggle alike, to the fact that bodies are bodies, and pleasure is pleasure. Severus had read his Foucault, of course, and had little use for Victorian mores. "Prince Albert," in his opinion, hadn't been much of a wizard. The dolt managed to keep his Muggle wife on the throne for almost sixty-four years, even after his "death," but couldn't get the woman to appreciate a good shag. Ridiculous.

Thus Severus was not shocked to find memories of sexual encounters with both men and women in Brandon's mind. He was shocked, however, to find himself saddened by the clinical nature of every one of these encounters. The two men were alike in so many ways. Severus's childhood love of Lily had kept love out of his erotic encounters. But Brandon's childhood love of Eliza had kept all feeling, except the purely physical, out of his encounters. And the physical pleasure he allowed himself was cold comfort. While Severus was duly impressed by the magnificence (if he did say so himself) of Brandon's cock – the perfect double of his own – he was horrified at the perfunctory way in which the man yielded it.

"My gods, man," Severus whispered absently to himself, "when you're given a scepter you don't use it just to poke blindly into whatever holes you can find, like a child with a bit of stick!" Clearly he had more than one lesson to teach tonight. Luck was with him this time, as Severus was an excellent teacher. When he wanted to be.

Evening fell gratifyingly early despite the time of year (Severus gave thanks for the dust of the city, even though it was composed mostly of powdered horse shit). Once the same little servant lass he has scared that morning put down the tray of consomme and tea (idiot girl) in Brandon's room, Severus glared at her wordlessly – effecting her immediate disappearance. Really, Muggles were too easy. Any halfway competent wizard didn't even need a wand in this reality.

Dismissing the servants from his mind as readily as he had dismissed the girl from the room, Severus turned to his "patient." After modifying the consomme with a headache antidote, he gently raised Brandon's head and poured a small spoonful down the man's throat. When Brandon awoke, a few moments later, he found Severus wiping his face with a cool, damp cloth.

"That feels wonderful," he breathed.

"Is the pain lessened?" Severus purred.

"Why, it's gone completely!" Brandon tried to sit up.

"Please lie back. The medicine needs time to work."

"Whatever medicine you've used, Doctor, it's amazing."

"Not 'Doctor.' 'Professor.' Or 'Severus,' if you like."

"Professor Snape, thank you."

Severus sighed. He had agreed to save his family name, but that didn't mean he had to like it. Ah well. He would hear "Severus" before the night was over. He used his "medical" authority to push Brandon more firmly back into the pillows, and resumed his gentle strokes with the damp cloth.

"While you were resting and I was mixing up the medicine, I had a thought about your current situation with this Willoughby and Miss Marianne."
Brandon groaned. "Please, no. I've just been enjoying a few moments without pain."

"I do not speak to cause you pain. I believe that I can suggest ... a solution to your problem."

"Professor, thank you. You are too kind. I promise you I have thought the matter through thoroughly. There is nothing I can do to stop him that is within the bonds of propriety and honor."

Bloody Gryffindors. Snape turned on his most persuasive tone: "I would never go so far as to suggest that you insult your honor, sir. However, I have found, in my studies and travels, that propriety is simply a matter of custom and location. I am sure that your time in the service gave you ample opportunity to come to the same conclusion."

This gave the Colonel pause. However much of a gentleman he was, in appearance and fact, he was also very much a man of the world.

"However," Severus continued, "not everyone has the benefit of our experience. Or of our intelligence." Perhaps he was thinking too much of Potter. He brought his mind back to the current topic with an effort. "Certainly not everyone shares our sense of honor. Just think how the tragic scene we endured last night could have been avoided had Willoughby any sense of decency, let alone honor."

"Willoughby?" Brandon lifted his head off the pillows, and looked around the room in confusion.

Severus firmly pushed him back onto the pillows. "Yes. Willoughby. The 'man' who seduced, abducted, impregnated, and abandoned your ward."

At this Brandon sat bolt upright and pushed the covers back. Severus grasped his arm to keep the man on the bed. Honestly, he thought, Brandon was worse than a Hippogriff.

"You want revenge. I want justice. You want Marianne. I want to amend for my failure to save Beth."

"Beth. Marianne." Severus was beginning to worry that he had inadvertently given the man a Confundus Potion instead of a simple headache cure, or that his riffling around in Brandon’s mind had caused more harm than he had thought. Brandon let out one, choked sob, and grasped Severus’s free arm. He pulled the professor close to him and narrowed his eyes, "Yes, Professor. I do want revenge. And I cannot honorably stand by while he kills – Yes! – kills another innocent."

Now this Brandon I can work with, Severus thought. He pulled Brandon even closer to himself. "Sometimes," he whispered into the man's ear, "to be men, we simply have to take what we want." He opened his mouth and gently, but firmly, bit down on Brandon's earlobe.

Definitely a Hippogriff, Snape though with grim amusement as he tried to slow down the man below him. He wasn’t sure how his hint would be taken, and had been as ready for another punch to the face as for any other reaction. He did not expect to be met with a man with identical strength and build to his, but with the enthusiasm (and the finesse) of a seventeen-year-old. Severus was no Gryffindor. He was, however, a Slytherin. And the serpent can conquer any animal, including man.

He had the advantage of position, he had the advantage of experience (proper experience), and he knew how to use his voice. Brandon had the same voice as Severus, but he had clearly only ever used its powers in battle, if then. Well, he was a Colonel, so Severus supposed he must have used all of his considerable gifts in battle. However, in every experience, in every memory that Severus had seen of the man, Brandon kept his voice low and gentle. It was wasted on this man, just as much as his prick was. Their voice was not for mollycoddling servants and lovers. It was a
weapon, it was a caress, it was power.

While Brandon sloppily licked at his face with his tongue (honestly, might as well be in bed with Sirius), Severus licked at the other man's libido with his voice. At first the soothing words were honey, were coffee so strong only the Turks would dream it up. When this had little to no effect on the writhing, slobbering idiot beneath him Severus used his voice like a lash:

"Colonel Brandon," he spat, disdainfully, "you forget yourself."

The voice was rather too effective, as the man beneath him instantly stilled and reddened. It was actually rather interesting to see a blush on "his" face, as Severus was certain that he had never evinced such a thing before.

"I’m so sorry ... Professor. I thought ..."

"Your thoughts are correct, Colonel. It is your actions to which I take exception," the voice of the classroom, of detention. The voice one uses when speaking of cockroaches.

Severus tightened his hold as the other man began to squirm (Squirm! Like a first-year) underneath him, trying to escape as he stammered, "But ... but ... but ..."

"Yes, Colonel. Butt. But not yet. This is not a strike against an enemy fortress ... " The voice was cool, like ice on bare feet. "This," and now the voice burned, "is a celebration. Of life."

Severus took advantage of the man's gobsmacked expression and slowly, carefully, licked Brandon's mouth. Like a cat licking the cream off his whiskers. Delicious. He was happily surprised to find that it was not, indeed, like kissing himself. Lifelong habits had their effects. Brandon's mouth had been held differently, and thus reacted differently. The man had his own taste, as well. While Severus knew that he tasted and smelt of citrus, Brandon seemed to have soaked up some of the airs from his travels. His mouth tasted, and his skin smelt (Severus had a very sensitive nose, as befits a Potions Master) of spices.

"We shall take our time. You, sir, are in fact recovering from quite a dangerous headache. I recommend that you lay as still as possible while I continue my ... examination." The voice was a rough purr for this last, but it was clearly an order. And Colonel Christopher Brandon, like the excellent soldier he was, obeyed.

Relieved that his partner had finally stopped wriggling and drooling, Severus took a moment (well, quite a few moments, actually) to survey the terrain. He began by releasing his grasp on Brandon's arms, and putting a long finger to his lips he hushed the other man to quiet stillness. Satisfied, he smiled slowly and moved down to the foot of the bed. He was grudgingly pleased when Brandon didn't lift his head to the pillows. There was something to be said for military discipline, despite his negative experiences with the Death Eaters', and the Aurors', mockery of the same. He was earnestly pleased when the man did not jerk his foot away when Severus licked it from heel to toe, ending with a nip of the big toe. The poor, naive man simply needed instruction – clearly the latent talent was there.

After licking the sole of Brandon's other foot, Severus began to suck Brandon's toes into his mouth. He held the foot firmly, to avoid tickling his patient, his student, and thoroughly laved the space in between each toe before wrapping his mouth around the next. Initially rigid, whether with shock or ticklishness, Brandon began to relax by the time Severus put down his left foot and started on his right. By the time Severus's hands moved up to Brandon's calves, massaging them with his long, strong fingers, Brandon was panting a little. Severus was still smiling when he moved up to massage Brandon's thighs. He didn't realize he was smiling. He assured himself that the massage was simply to relax the Colonel – the man would no use to him if he continued
wound tight as a watchspring. But the slow kneading of his hands was relaxing Severus as well. It felt more like preparing ingredients for a complex, ingenious potion than it was like what Severus thought of as sex.

The truth is, and was, that Severus was highly experienced, and highly skilled, in the use of his erotic talents. But the poor man had never made love. He would not even like to hear that phrase in the same paragraph as his own name, so we’ll keep this our little secret. We will only note that while, at times, the connection that Severus and Lucius shared was indeed a celebration – it was always only a celebration of death. Their passion had never truly "made" anything. It only destroyed.

When his fingers reached the top of Brandon's thighs, Severus took a moment to grasp the strong legs, burrowing his thumbs underneath Brandon's balls. And he squeezed. A groan escaped from the Colonel's mouth, before the man remembered the unspoken command to be silent and clapped a hand over his mouth. Severus let out an wicked chuckle and took his hands off of Brandon for the first time in many, many minutes. He moved up to put his face close to Brandon's. The man kept a hand over his mouth, but his eyes looked panicked, as he assumed Severus had stopped touching him as punishment for the noise he had let escape.

Severus gently lifted Brandon's hand from his mouth, kissed the palm, and licked it. He placed the hand on Brandon's stomach, with a stern look to indicate that there the hand must stay, and the voice comforted his pupil with honeyed words: "Don't worry. I'm not stopping. I just thought you might be relaxed enough to kiss me properly now."

Severus's example had already had an effect, as Brandon was too petrified to react when Severus began to kiss him. While not ideal, it was preferable to the panting, slobbering puppy he had been before the lesson began. Severus brought one hand to Brandon's jaw, the other to the back of his head. While forcing the man's mouth open (slowly, gently) with his tongue, he massaged the back of Brandon's head and pressed his hand firmly against Brandon's jaw – easing the joint to open slowly. Another groan escaped from Brandon when Severus ran his tongue over Brandon's teeth, and he took the advantage of the open mouth and pressed his tongue against the roof of Brandon's mouth. This shocked the Colonel into action, but as Severus's hands had a strong grip on his jaw and now his hair, he couldn't make too much of a mess out of kissing back. Severus was beginning to appreciate Brandon's blind, thrashing, mindless passion. As long as he kept a firm hand on things, it was rather refreshing to experience something other than stunning control and knifelike precision from a partner. Or so he thought until Brandon grabbed his arms, expertly flipped him onto his back, and pinned him down to the bed.

"I think you've had adequate time for a thorough inspection, Professor." Brandon was a quick study in all things physical – he had had to be to survive his years in the service of his country. His voice was no longer low and soft. In fact, it was quite a new sort of use for the voice. Severus had never used quite that tone of passion – it was like a river, rushing the listener along and bringing him to the bottom. It was quite an accomplishment to surprise Severus Snape – usually only Albus Dumbledore could manage it. But Colonel Christopher Brandon was proving to be a man of many talents. The voice held Severus down, under the bright, rushing water: "I think it is time for me to take your advice and take what I want." And with no further ado, he slid down Severus's torso and swallowed his cock whole.

Now it was Severus's turn to go rigid. Not his cock – it had been hard since the moment he raised his finger to hush the other man. His entire body was actually taut with the surprise of the moment. In all of Brandon's memories he had watched (and it had, indeed, been a rather long afternoon) there had been nothing like this. He had figured Brandon for a typical, unimaginative top. It had been all poking and prodding and thrusting. But this ... As he came back into his body, Severus began to enjoy the rewards of the effort he had taken with Brandon's feet. The man was an
excellent mimic. He licked up the top of Severus's cock, and down the bottom, teased the head, and then sucked the whole shaft into his mouth. And then he did it again. And again. And again.

Ten toes, only one cock to reap the benefits. A very satisfying trade. At the same time Brandon's own long fingers were carefully, firmly massaging Severus's balls. It was honestly as though Severus had fallen victim some sort of doppelganger curse (blessing?) and was giving himself head. Not in some sort of gymnastic, freakish, dog-like matter (why couldn't he keep Sirius out of his head whilst he was in bed?), but that the other man, literally, was doing exactly what Severus would have done to himself if he could. He really was an excellent teacher.

There was no time to rest on his laurels, however, because after forever and not long enough, Severus felt his entire being gather up into a ball of fire and burst out his cock. It did feel like fire, and the coolness of Brandon's mouth, and the current of his tongue and his lips as he swallowed, over and over, only made the flames burn higher. Now it was Severus's turn to moan, and to thrash. And even, perhaps, to squirm, as the sensation in his cock suddenly changed from ecstasy to an exquisitely painful tickling.

Brandon's head popped up and he smiled for the first time since Severus had met him (was it only last night?). "Whoever said you can't teach an old dog new tricks?" he snorted, before falling over in a heap of giggles at the look on Severus’s face. As he had already lost all dignity, all advantage, and as no one he would ever know would even be born for a few hundred years, it took less time than you would think for Severus to chuck it all out the metaphorical window and tackle the idiotic man on the bed beside him.

After the first time they were together, Severus stopped reading Brandon's mind. He believed that was because it really didn't seem to serve any purpose. In his experience, the typical Gryffindor mind was like a spinning top – their views, plans, and even their intelligence seemed to shift constantly. Perhaps, we may conjecture, it was also a bit too much like violating himself. And Severus had had plenty of *that, * thank you very much. He thought their almost identical looks were merely a pleasant and lucky surprise. The uncanny resemblance was, in fact, instrumental in Severus's plans for Willoughby. But this mirroring was also having an unexpected, and unsuspected, effect on Severus. The more he learned about Brandon and how truly different he was from himself, the more he felt like he was looking at himself when he looked at the other man. Paradoxically. But really, when you mix magic with time travel with a prophecy is there *really * any other way to look at things? Maybe we should borrow a scroll from Dumbledore, and consider this mission as a chance for Severus to experiment with his identity for a bit. After all – no one would ever, ever know. Obviously.

After the perfectly lovely coffee and toast of the previous morning, Severus was surprised by the sumptuous breakfast that awaited him and Brandon downstairs. He was even more surprised to see the bright smiles on the faces of Brandon’s servants. He had thought that house-elves only spoiled and petted their masters (and those already spoiled students at Hogwarts) because they were magically compelled to do so. The fact that rational, human servants could show genuine concern for and kindness to their master was almost unbelievable to him. Severus knew about strict codes of honor. But he did not know that a true gentleman, at that time and that place, was the head of a family that included not only his blood relatives, but also his servants and his tenants. And family honor in this world was as important as family honor in Severus’s world.

It also did not occur to Severus, used as he was to being surrounded by magical abilities, was that even Muggles (even Muggle servants) can see and hear things. They would no more speak of these things outside the family than a house-elf would betray his or her master, but that did not stop everyone in the Colonel’s kitchen from being very happy indeed that the upstairs girl had actually seen the Colonel smiling. They even decided, mostly at the insistence of Cook, to put aside their fears of the strange Professor who looked like the Devil's own version of their Colonel. Wicked he may be, but he had made their master smile. Though we are privy to these goings on
downstairs, the Colonel simply spared a moment to give thanks that his household was so pleasant, and Severus merely shrugged and helped himself to more of the excellent ham.

The Colonel left his guest to his own devices for the day. He had arrangements to make concerning Beth's remains, and his housekeeper had also told him about the young ladies that the stable boy had seen alighting from Miss Jennings' carriage that morning. While Brandon did his duty to his ward, and paid his visit to Miss Jennings' household, Severus did a little shopping and charmed a few pots and pans and the rights to a corner of the kitchen fireplace from Cook. He said he needed to replenish his "medical supplies," and Cook always did have a weakness for black eyes. As he worked to supply himself with a rudimentary potions kit, Severus listened to the servants' talk. It was far from the idle chatter he expected. He was bemused to discover that these lowly Muggles were actually quite accomplished spies. Nothing compared to himself, of course, but far superior to anyone with Auror training.

As the stable boy snuck yet another bun, whilst winking at Cook with a merry black eye, he told her that the young ladies with Miss Jennings were not quite the thing when it came to dress. Clearly they were the poor relations. But the younger was certainly pretty enough. A fair, fresh country maid. Perhaps she would succeed in turning the Colonel's head, although none of the more elegant ladies of the town had even made an impression, the Cook suggested to the upstairs girl. The upstairs girl simply sniffed and offered Severus tea. Again. "Well," he thought to himself, "this one is a bit more like the 'spies' I've had to work with in the Order. He had heard enough to ascertain that the country maid was Miss Marianne Dashwood. If she was half as silly as he expected, she would soon be making a fool of herself by running after Willoughby. He would have to step up the pace. He learned much useful information during his afternoon in Brandon's kitchen.

When Brandon arrived home for dinner, his smile was gone. His voice was once again low and soft. His eyes were heavy, though his manner was as gracious as ever. Severus knew that the situation with Beth was indeed a tragic one, and he was not one to begrudge a man his right to mourn. But he was irritated, nay, he was, well, he wasn't sure what the feeling was, but he was *not* pleased with the air of defeat that hung on Brandon like an ill-fitting cloak. The girl was dead. Surely a soldier could understand the futility of regret when all opportunity for action was lost.

The only sign of the strain of this confusing, impossible, yet not wholly unpleasant mission was having on Severus was the fact that it took him until the dessert course to recognize the reason for Brandon's air of surrender. It was the other girl. The living girl who was, indeed, exceedingly silly. So silly that she could not see the man in front of her. She was too busy pining after the boy who capered and pranced and would lead her down a very dark road indeed. Right. First he would dispatch the boy. Then he would teach Brandon how to captivate the girl. On the other hand, Severus thought as he took another bite of the delectable chocolate torte, he supposed he could at least make a beginning with the second task tonight. There would be time for revisions.

Being used to the excesses of Hogwarts, Severus took no time at all to adjust to the abundance of an 18th-century supper. He also appreciated the late dining hour – 10 p.m. was certainly a highly civilized time to quit work for the day. It was always a trial for him to leave his workshop for the 7 p.m. suppertime at Hogwarts. The students certainly could use the extra time to study that a later mealtime would allow. As he shook his head at the memory of the dunderheads he was expected to teach, year after year, while he waited for Voldemort to make his move, he suddenly became aware that Brandon had looked up. The defeated look had gone. In its place was a piercing gaze that lingered on the fork being withdrawn from Severus's mouth, and that dared him to desire, to submit. Severus never could resist a Gryffindor dare.

"I have been thinking," Severus drawled, "about the role of enthusiasm in the courtship of ladies."
Brandon lifted an eyebrow. "I am afraid, Prof. . . . Severus, that I am feeling a bit too old for enthusiasm today," he said.

"I'm sure that is merely due to the unpleasant duties you needed to perform for your poor ward today," Severus said in a respectful tone.

He was silent for a moment, allowing Brandon time for the man's sorrow. But only a moment. He continued in his most suggestive tone, as sticky and treacherous as the nectar in the bottom of a pitcher plant, as heady as mallowsweet fumes, "In our . . . dealings I have found you to be amongst the most . . . enthusiastic men I have met." Severus paused to relish the flush that was creeping up Brandon's face.

Severus added a drop of wormwood to the honeyed voice, "However, enthusiasm is a quality which is to be found in ample supply even in the most uncouth of boys. At least while they are young and accustomed to female attention."

Brandon's flush began as embarrassment, but it was growing out into anger. Severus continued, "I have found that there is something that is even more appealing to the ladies than enthusiasm." He waited for Brandon to ask, but the man simply looked at him, waiting to be taught. "What women want most, my dear Colonel, is a man's power. His control."

Brandon wasted no time in responding to this: "But certainly, Professor," (so we're back to "professor," Severus thought), "Surely, sir, an honorable man like yourself would have to agree that as gentlemen we are obliged, nay, privileged to treat women with the utmost care and gentleness, for they are the weaker sex and merit our protection."

The "weaker sex," indeed, thought Severus. He'd like to see the Colonel giving this speech to Bellatrix Lestrange. Or to Minerva McGonagell, for that matter. Severus couldn't bring himself to agree with Brandon, which surprised him a bit. He was so used to lying, to professing opposing convictions almost from one minute to the next. But the truth of woman's strength was something that only the foolish would deny, as the Dark Lord has discovered for himself a decade ago. Severus was many things, but he was neither a coward nor a fool.

He answered Brandon, "I do not speak of domination, or of degradation. Far from it. The true recognition of a woman's worth is only shown when a man respects her enough to offer her his strength. The control I speak of is not the control of a master over his slave. It is the control a man holds over his passions."

Brandon looked intrigued by this.

Severus needed to be very careful now. He switched to the timbre of a teacher – not the kind of teacher that he was when he was at Hogwarts, but of a true teacher who wants nothing more than to lead his pupil to enlightenment. "Sometimes, when a man's passions run deep, he makes the mistake of denying them. But this is not natural, nor is it what women want from a man. Indeed, it should not be what a man wants from himself. What is best, what is honorable, what is well-neigh irresistible, is a man who controls his passion but does not deny it. Who wields his power and strength with the control of a master swordsman." Perhaps that last was a *bit* broad, but it was getting to be very late in the evening indeed. Severus's voice sank back down into the nectared tone of a Venus flytrap, "It is not only women who find this kind of power and control irresistible."

Colonel Brandon practically dragged Severus up the stairs.

It was . . . different for Severus to play a passive role in the bedroom. It went against his self-protective instincts. He was used to giving better than he got, if at all possible. In fact, to give
without return was a sign of superior will in Death Eater circles – a perversion of the traditional selflessness of love, but a powerful perversion. You might say it was one of Severus's strengths, conditioned as he was by a childhood full of neglect and abuse. It had never really occurred to him that accepting another's control (like a child, like a woman . . . he would have protested) does not necessarily mean submitting. That letting go of control can be a form of strength in itself. Seeks he really was a sexist, despite his abstract respect for women's power. But that is hardly the worst thing one could think about Severus Snape, and it seems a bit petty to make too much of it. He will soon spend approximately 9 ½ months learning that particular lesson, after all.

For him to achieve his goal, the actual goal of this mission, to ensure that his ancestress was born, Severus needed to receive. He also had to teach Brandon how to give. Ever happy to kill two pixies with a single hex, Severus plunged into his unaccustomed role with determination. He had not been this set on being seduced since he was a first-year student and Lucius Malfoy had finally noticed him in the Slytherin Common Room. He vowed to sit on his hands and button his lip. Metaphorically, of course. He had given Brandon the necessary theory for seduction. It was up to the Colonel to work out the practical application. Luckily practical application was one of the Colonel's strengths.

Severus stood just inside the door of Brandon's bedchamber. The man had dragged him inside and then dropped his hand and *run* to the bed, bouncing like an ill-trained puppy. Severus waited. Brandon looked confused. Severus did not move, and began to find the situation quite amusing. However, it *was* late, so he gave the man a hint: "Control, Colonel Brandon. Strength and control."

There. That turned the proper light on in Brandon's eyes. Severus mused that it was quite rewarding to actually have a responsive pupil for once, as he admired Brandon stalking across the room on his long, well-muscled legs. The tight breeches and waistcoats and cutaway coats of the late 18th century were surely the most provocative men's clothing Severus had ever seen. He would have to borrow some of this style for himself when he returned to his own time. Severus smiled at the thought of himself in high-necked, tight-fitting robes, perhaps with a cape for dramatic flourishing, instead of his usual shapeless and faded teaching garb. Brandon stood before him and grasped his shoulders. Then Brandon kissed that smile right off of his face.

He was not quite a cat got into the cream, but he was no longer a dog slobbering over a bone. Brandon had developed quite a new style of kissing that Severus was quickly learning to enjoy immensely. It was slow, but thorough. Not demanding, but not gentle, either. It was as though Brandon knew that he had complete dominion over Severus, and that there was no hurry to enjoy what was rightfully his. Severus had been, and was, a weapon. He was a spy. He was a student and a teacher and a slave. But he had never truly belonged to anyone. He had never really been claimed, as himself. Only as a tool to serve others' goals. He resisted at first – accepting Brandon's tongue, his teeth, his lips, his hands, but not his will. But when Brandon stopped kissing him, and began to call him "beautiful" in that voice you could drown in, a dam that Severus did not even know he had built inside of himself suddenly, violently, irrevocably burst.

The only indication of Severus's surrender was a deep moan. But that was enough. Brandon *was* a Gryffindor, after all. He continued to caress Severus with compliments, with promises, as he undid the buttons on the borrowed coat, waistcoat, and breeches.

"Oh, yes, and there will be buttons. Lots and lots of tiny buttons . . . ." was Severus's last coherent thought for quite some time.

Severus was not sure how had crossed the room and ended up naked, on his back, on Brandon's bed. Even more astonishingly, he did not care. Perhaps he had been dragged there by the riptide of Brandon's voice. The voice continued to wash over him, more relaxing than any massage, as
Brandon’s fingers wrapped around his own. Brandon lifted Severus's hands over his head and gave the professor a stern look. Severus smirked, but nodded in agreement. He would obey. Still fully clothed, Brandon was kneeling on the bed between Severus’s legs. Suddenly, Brandon spread his knees and pushed Severus's thighs wide apart. Severus couldn't help gasping. He was nude, spread-eagled, forbidden to use his hands, and Brandon definitely had a wicked gleam in his eye. His voice had changed, too. As he left the bed he admonished Severus not to move in a voice that must have held him well on the battlefield. It sounded like a sheathed sword. You knew it would be sharp, but not how sharp it could be. Severus could not remember the last time his cock had been this hard.

When Brandon climbed back onto the bed and resumed his place between Severus's legs, he was still fully clothed. Severus had no idea what the man was thinking, and started to protest. Mimicking Severus's gesture from the night before, the Colonel simply raised a finger to his lips. Severus flung his head back on the bed. Fine. Let the man dilly and dally. But, really, how was a bloke supposed to get knocked up at this rate?

Things were no more promising in this vein when Brandon began to rub his freshly oiled hands up and down Severus's impressive length. Severus couldn't really complain, Brandon was using his strong fingers in a way that really left no room for whinging. Severus threw in the towel and decided to just enjoy himself. He could get in the family way another time. With a true soldier's instinct, Brandon seemed to read Severus's thoughts. He pulled away his hands just as the hot tide of Severus's arousal was rushing from his chest to his cock. Severus moaned again, and had to bite his lip hard enough to draw blood to keep from grabbing the damn thing himself.

The blade of Brandon's voice was drawn out of the scabbard, just enough for a peek at the tempered steel of his will. "Now, now, Professor. I believe the lesson you set for me was about *control*.

If Severus hadn't wanted to scream with frustration, he would have laughed at the man's nerve. Bloody Gryffindor cheek certainly had its uses. As did the fall front opening on Brandon's tight breeches. Pants, or "underpants" as some readers might call them, were not a common item in the 18th century. It took very little time for Brandon's own, identically impressive length to spring forth from his trousers, even as his buttocks and thighs were still tightly encased by the velvet breeches.

Brandon leaned over and began to rub his cock slowly against Severus's. As he did, he once again took firm possession of Severus's mouth with his own. Being held down by cock and mouth was the only thing that kept Severus from drifting off of the bed on waves of passion. The sharp pain on his stomach and chest from the press of the tiny buttons on Brandon’s waistcoat kept him grounded, kept him from drowning in too much pleasure. "Oh yes. So many buttons," Severus thought feverishly.

Suddenly Brandon abandoned his mouth, but Severus's moan of disappointment became a gasp of pleasure as Brandon's teeth bit down on a nipple. The sharp pain distracted him from the press of Brandon's fingers into his ass. By the time Brandon had licked away the hurt and moved on to bite his other nipple, Severus was arching in pleasure from the steady rocking and twisting of two, then three fingers working inside him. Brandon man once again seemed to read his mind, for the moment Severus became aware of Brandon's oiled cock on his thigh, Brandon withdrew his fingers, pulled back, lifted Severus's ass with a firm hand on each cheek, and impaled the professor like the master swordsman he was born to be. And thus Severus Snape was slain.

They both came almost instantly. The lesson in control was learned well, but the body is only human – whether we be Muggle or wizard. Brandon beamed at Severus, pulled out with a loud plop, laughed, tore his breeches right in half to free himself from them, popped the buttons off of
his waistcoat whilst wrenching it off, pulled Severus over for a big sloppy kiss, and promptly fell asleep. His dress shirt did not cover his bare ass, but he lay on top of the covers with no more care of exposure than a baby. Severus allowed himself to lie there, naked, leaking and stunned, for a few moments. Then he shook his head, and rolled carefully off of the bed. He spared an admiring glance at the Colonel's taut thighs before he wrapped himself in a dressing gown he found by the bed and crept back to the guest room. All that and the man hadn't even taken off his trousers. Merlin. He hoped this Marianne was sturdy, as well as silly.

He cleaned himself up as well as he could, but he didn't feel like going to sleep. His usual manner of dealing with his insomnia * pacing the halls of Hogwarts castle * was not to be had. He was glad that the servants had not questioned his presence in their master's home and in his bed, but he didn't want to push his luck by pacing the halls all night long. He couldn't stop shaking his head (not even sure whether it was from amusement or bemusement) as he absently fiddled with the Gordian knot of silver cord at the top of Slytherin's shillelagh. When it came off in his hand, he was startled. Had he actually managed to break the Founder's treasure? His nerves instantly calmed when he noticed that the pommel had concealed that the staff was actually hollow. Slowly he tipped the shillelagh, as though pouring a pitcher of water. His wand slid out. Severus carefully placed the shillelagh, the pommel, and his wand on the dresser. He went over to the bed, lay down, buried his head in the pillow, and laughed until he cried until he fell asleep.

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Severus didn't sleep for long. In the early light of dawn, reunited with his wand, he was able to determine that conception had occurred. There was no reason to linger.

Severus cast a complex Memory Charm on the still-sleeping Brandon. The Colonel would always have fond memories of the time he spent Professor Severus Snape, the elderly professor of medicine who had saved the life of Beth's baby and had spirited the infant off to a safe home in the country. And who looked exactly like Albus Dumbledore. Brandon remembered the lengthy conversations he had had with the Professor about manliness, and the obligation a man had to act according to his principles, even if it meant defying propriety. And if the upstairs girl would blush, and Cook would chuckle, whenever Brandon mentioned the Professor, he didn't pay much mind. He conjectured that the Professor, while a very respectable old chap in most regards, must be a sad flirt in the kitchen.

Brandon did not remember the sex per se, but Severus left the "lessons" behind a thin membrane in Brandon's mind. The next person who found him or herself in an intimate situation with the Colonel benefit from Severus's tutelage. With any luck, Marianne would be the one to get the credit for the Colonel's sexual awakening, and that would cement the relationship between the two. Brandon deserved something for the unwitting role he had played in the salvation of the Snape family line. Before he finally left Brandon's bedchamber, Severus had one last inspiration. He whispered a magically re-enforced suggestion into Brandon's ear, using his most erotic tone: "You might begin by reading to the lady."

Severus collected his freshly made potions from the kitchen and left the house well before breakfast. The servants said nothing. It was not their place to question the ways of the gentry. Severus did not look back as he walked away from Brandon's lodgings. He swore to himself that he would never, never look back.

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Time: 4 days later

Place: Covent Gardens
Mr. John Willoughby was extremely surprised to encounter Colonel Brandon in the notorious red-light district, especially as it was well past midnight. In fact, he thought that perhaps someone had slipped something into his drink and that he was hallucinating. The fact that Willoughby could talk to the man, and shake his hand, did not mean that he was mistaken in his first suspicions. Suddenly, somehow, he found himself sprawled on a four-poster bed in a shabby bedroom with the Colonel, with no memory of how he had gotten there. Things just got more surprising from that point on.

Professor Severus Snape had certainly seen his share of horrors. He had, in fact, committed his share of horrors. He was perhaps not the most *enthusiastic * Death Eater, but perfectionism will out. Severus had never given the Dark Lord a moment's worry about his commitment to the rigors of torture, to the rites of suffering. But what he had seen in Willoughby's mind had rather astonished him. Voldemort, and even Malfoy, had the decency to eventually kill their victims. Willoughby evinced a lack of consideration for his prey that outshone the sadism of Bellatrix Lestrange.

Libertines like Willoughby were the direct cause of the suffering Severus witnessed every time he passed a female beggar on these London streets, many of them clutching their starving, diseased children. And these rakehells thought nothing of it. Severus realized that this *creature * that he now had under his control was no James Potter. Like Potter, Willoughby had the flashy plumage and empty head of a strutting peacock; but when he unsheathed his claws they were as razor-sharp as any Scottish wildcat's.

What was worse, to Severus at least, than the score of women that Willoughby had ruined and abandoned, were the monstrous ideas he had about Colonel Christopher Brandon. "Weak and mealy-mouthed?" "Old and impotent?" "Coward?" Severus was sorely tempted to add his own special version of the Cruciatus Curse to his plans for tonight. But he vowed to maintain his self-control, as he always did. He would follow his plan and use Muggle methods on this less-than-human. This "lesson" would only be successful if Willoughby *believed * that he was in the hands of Colonel Brandon.

When Willoughby awoke he was startled to find that those hands (or at least hands identical to those) were currently roaming all over his body.

"Ay, princock! Mind your hands now!" he exclaimed, still drunk and very, very confused.

"So, you're awake, love," Severus purred.

Willoughby tried to push the man whom he thought was the Colonel off of himself.

"What's all this, then? Leave off . . ."

Severus covered the man's mouth roughly with his hand and shoved him back onto the bed. Keeping his hand there, he used his free hand to stroke Willoughby's hair back from his face.

"Hush, now, hush. It's time for you to . . . *enjoy * . . . a taste of your own medicine," he whispered huskily into Willoughby’s ear.

This caused Willoughby to struggle even harder, and he attempted to bite the hand that covered his mouth. Severus pulled his hand back and slapped Willoughby, hard, forehand and backhand.

"Pussy likes to play rough, does it? I thought you might," Severus growled. He pressed a rough kiss to Willoughby's mouth, thrusting his tongue between the other man's teeth. Willoughby bit down.
Severus grasped the man around the throat with both hands and squeezed.

"That was . . . unwise," he said in the tone he reserved for interrogations and first-year detentions. Severus's long fingers maintained their strong grasp on Willoughby's throat until the man's eyes began to roll back in his head. Only then did he relax his hands. As Willoughby choked and gasped, Severus held him, releasing just enough pressure on the other man's neck to allow air in, but not enough to let him move.

"Shall we try again? Or do I need to tie you up?"

Willoughby's eyes were now panicked as he panted for breath. He croaked, "Please . . . please . . ."

"I promise that I will show you exactly as much tenderness and compassion as you show your own lovers." Severus uttered this promise, this threat, in a honeyed voice. As Willoughby thrashed and swore, Severus reinforced the silencing and locking spells on the room, and put the ropes he had prepared to their intended use. Willoughby clearly didn't have the sense of a Flobberworm. His struggles would simply exhaust him and save Severus effort in the long run. Cowards were so terribly predictable.

Once he had Willoughby where he wanted him, Severus resumed his exploration of the man's body with his hands. Willoughby was standing on the balls of his feet, with each wrist bound to a post at the foot of the bed. He was still fully clothed. His arms were pulled so taut that he could not even rock back and forth. He could not kick his legs forward to gain momentum for a backwards kick, as his shins were pressed against the footboard of the bed. He was as helpless as a cat hung by its tail. While Severus for Willoughby to become completely aware of the irrevocability of his situation, he stood behind him and ran his fingers up and down the man's body, tickling or pinching the tender flesh at irregular intervals.

"Do not think, Willoughby, that this means that I desire you," he said in a stern voice, as he gently rubbed the man's chest. "I simply know that you like to lull your lovers into a false sense of security with some petting before you take them to heel. It makes the pleasure of conquest that much sweeter, does it not?" And he ripped Willoughby's jacket open, then his waistcoat. Buttons popped and were scattered to all corners of the room. Willoughby moaned loudly.

"Is that fear or excitement, my pussy? Will you purr for me now that I have denied you the use of your claws?" Severus whispered the questions into Willoughby's ear, and bit down savagely. Willoughby screamed, and Severus leaned forward and spat the blood in a fine spray onto the front of Willoughby's white, ruffled dress shirt. Severus chuckled, "Now that's pretty, isn't it my pet? I think that I would like to see more of this evidence that you have a heart. It's the first sign I've seen that it is so."

Severus could feel that he was getting a little too . . . involved in the scenario he had engineered. He needed to maintain the illusion that Colonel Brandon was teaching this particular lesson. And Brandon was a Gryffindor, not a Slytherin. His style of discipline would be straightforward and merciless, perhaps, but not subtle. It was time to take a moment and regroup.

Willoughby went into a greater panic than ever when he no longer felt or heard the man behind him. He whimpered uncontrollably as he whipped his head back and forth, trying to catch a glimpse of Brandon, trying to affirm, to deny whatever was coming next. Severus stayed back, stayed hidden and made his preparations while he waited for the man to quiet. Eventually the whimpers died down into panting gasps, and Willoughby's head hung forward on his chest.

Severus waited a few moments, and stepped forward. He made a quick, short cut at the top of the man's breeches, then grabbed the fabric in both hands and ripped it apart. Willoughby was still
gathering the breath to scream when Severus tore into him.

There was no passion in Severus's thrusts. He simply pounded his cock into Willoughby over, and over, with the rhythm and the power of some terrible engine. The potion he had rubbed over himself kept him from being bruised by Willoughby's tight ring of muscle as he ripped through it again and again. Severus was completely silent in response to Willoughby's screams. Willoughby had offered no preparation, no explanation and no quarter to his victims. He would find none for himself.

When Willoughby's screams transformed to rasping coughs, Severus pulled out and severed the ropes that held the man upright. He gave Willoughby a rough shove in the small of his back, ensuring that the man fell forward, bent over the bed, instead of collapsing in a heap on the floor. Severus waited to be sure that Willoughby was not going anywhere before he turned to the dresser behind him and took up the bag that lay there, and the glass of water.

He sat on the bed next to Willoughby. The man showed some spirit, at last, and turned his face away. Severus smirked and pulled Willoughby's head up by his hair. As Willoughby gaped, Severus slowly, tenderly, poured the water down his throat. A field mediwizard spell ensured that the water did not choke the man. When the glass was empty, Severus let go of Willoughby's hair and his head dropped back onto the bed.

Then Severus finally spoke.

"That was a lesson about what happens to naughty, nasty little boys when they hurt girls. The water was so I can hear you scream while you learn your lesson about what happens to upstart coxcombs when they disrespect their superiors."

Willoughby resumed whimpering when he saw what Severus lovingly drew out of the bag.

Severus did admire the craftsmanship shown by the retired bosun from whom he had commissioned the Cat o’ nine tails. He knew very well that a narrow leather strap, or a thin birch rod, would inflict more actual pain that the elaborately woven whip. But for showmanship, the Royal Navy's methods of discipline and punishment were unparalleled. And he wanted to make a very strong impression on Willoughby's memory tonight. This time Severus explained exactly what was going to happen next.

"Traditionally, my brothers in the Navy use the Cat on *men *. Men run the gauntlet, taking lashes on their backs from each of their shipmates in turn. Boys, on the other hand, are bent over the gun barrel and whipped on their bare arses. You look like a man, but inside you are a boy. You shall be punished like the child that you are." And he brought the Cat down on Willoughby's already torn and tortured ass.

When the man tried to scramble away, up further onto the bed, Severus grabbed his hair again and pulled him back down to his knees. "Additional punishment, Willoughby. If you can't take it like a man, at least *try * to take it like a boy."

Willoughby didn't try to escape after that. And he only screamed for the first dozen lashes. When Severus switched hands for the second dozen, to ensure that the wounds would crisscross and thus be doubly painful, Willoughby simply keened and rolled his head from side to side. He was silent for the final dozen lashes.

When he was finished, Severus threw the Cat onto the bed, grasped Willoughby under the armpits and tossed him down next to the bloody whip.

"I'll just leave that there for you. A Cat for my pussy to remember me by."
Severus sealed Willoughby's wounds as he lay unconscious on the bed. They were now protected against infection and were less visible, but no less painful. He whispered magically-reinforced threats into the man's ear. Colonel Brandon had been at a dinner party evening, and his servants would confirm that he had returned directly home. There was no way he could have been in Covent Gardens, let alone in a seedy brothel with Willoughby. And if Willoughby ever contacted, or even looked at Marianne Dashwood again, he could expect to spend another night with the Colonel.

No one saw Severus leave the building, just as no one had seen him enter. And Mr. John Willoughby never knowingly came within 500 yards of Marianne Dashwood or Colonel Christopher Brandon again.

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Location: Bath

There was nothing to remark about yet another red-faced, splenetic, extremely portly gentleman in Bath. If the man's servants were at first dismayed by his erratic moods and his sharp tongue, they were amply compensated for their suffering by their generous wages. And once his housekeeper noticed that the poor man barely ate enough to keep body and soul together, yet grew fatter every week, she was quick to excuse his irregularities. She just wished that he would not visit so frequently with that strange old midwife. He simply announced that the woman assisted him whilst he was making his medicines, and never allowed another word to be said about it. Since the sale of his medicines to the local apothecaries paid all of their wages, the housekeeper firmly squelched the complaints about the "old witch" from the under-servants.

The night that he "died" cemented his household's pity for the fellow. The screams were so piteous, and the glimpse of the blood-spattered room that one of the maids caught when she was ordered up with hot water was so horrifying, that the servants were left shaking and pale for days. But the terms of his will – well, they were unprecedented. The post-mortem largesse of Sebastian Prince, poor soul, ensured that his servants, and even their children, would never stand to hear a word against the man.

Epilogue (Then)
Time: 180-
Location: Devonshire

When Colonel Brandon received a letter from his old friend Professor Snape, suggesting that the Colonel take a greater hand in his ward's education, the Colonel made a decision. He had married a loving, sympathetic, and most of all grateful, woman. She was more than happy to welcome Sirena Elizabeth Brandon, 6 years of age, into the nursery with her own children. Marianne and her sister knew the story of Sirena's birth – Elinor had been told by the Colonel himself that his previous ward had been seduced and abandoned by John Willoughby. If Elinor had any doubts as to the veracity of this story after meeting Sirena, she was sensible enough to keep them to herself. And Marianne was certainly not one to point fingers. She had made her share of mistakes, and had been saved from their consequences by the kindness of her husband. Besides, the little girl was charming. How could she not be? She was the spitting image of the man Marianne loved more than anyone else in the world.

Marianne often mused Sirena's mother must have been Italian. It would explain her black hair and eyes, and the shocking intensity of the girl's emotions. In the nursery Sirena stuck out like a mountain peak in a meadow – so much dark, handsome nerve surrounded by a troop of gentle, pretty little blonde boys and girls. No matter how she vexed them, however, her younger "siblings" always adored her. In fact, they practically worshipped Sirena, even when she
tormented them. She could always soothe or command her little followers into, or out of, anything. Marianne thought it must have something to do with the power of the girl's lovely voice. It was so much like her father's.

Epilogue (Now)

Time: June 1990

Place: Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

If Albus Dumbledore was surprised at what occurred when Severus finally grasped Slytherin's shillelagh, he would never show it. The peaky, rather greasy man, clad in ill-fitting, faded robes, was instantly replaced by a nicely-filled out gentleman, dressed in quite a dramatic frock coat and snug velvet breeches. Severus Snape took one look around him and, without further ado, slumped to the floor. Dumbledore transfigured his settee into a nice bed and levitated Severus over to it for a good night's sleep. The fact that the Headmaster had unconsciously created a perfect replica of a Gryffindor dormitory bed caused Severus no small amount of panic when he awoke to find himself in a student's bed enclosed by red velvet curtains.

But he had several hours of peace ahead before that indignity was to be faced. So we, taking our cue from Albus Dumbledore, who certainly knows best, should just let the poor man sleep. The Headmaster may have cocked an eyebrow when he loosened Severus's waistcoat a bit, but on the whole he approved of the vast number of buttons involved. They suited the man's character, after all. Perhaps it is best to avoid the obvious pun, although Dumbledore certainly did not abstain from many a private chuckle over his Potions Professor's tendency to "button things up" in the upcoming years.

No matter how many biscuits Dumbledore plied him with, Severus Snape stuck to the bare details during his debriefing the next evening. The mission had been successfully accomplished. That was all that the Headmaster needed to know. Severus was far too successful an Occlumens to give Dumbledore even a peek at the details. When Severus responded to a last push of prodding with a particularly pointed glare, Dumbledore chuckled and gave up.

"The mission seems not to have done you any lasting harm," he twinkled at Severus.

At this Severus's eyes narrowed dangerously. Dumbledore shook his head, and offered Severus an olive branch.

"Ah well, dear boy. I can promise you some revenge. When it is my time to leave this plane of existence, you shall be the one to kill me."

"It will be my pleasure, sir," Severus hissed.

Of course, he was wrong. As usual.

Severus hadn't changed *that *much from his experiences over the past year. Well, over *his *past year, actually. Or something. Temporal paradoxes are tricky. And while having Sirena Elizabeth Brandon instead of Hortense Snape as an ancestress did change some things about Professor Severus Snape, it did not change everything. Besides, "everything," like "never," like "always," is a word for Muggles and children. Wizards and witches know there is no such thing.

*fin*
Written in 2009.

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